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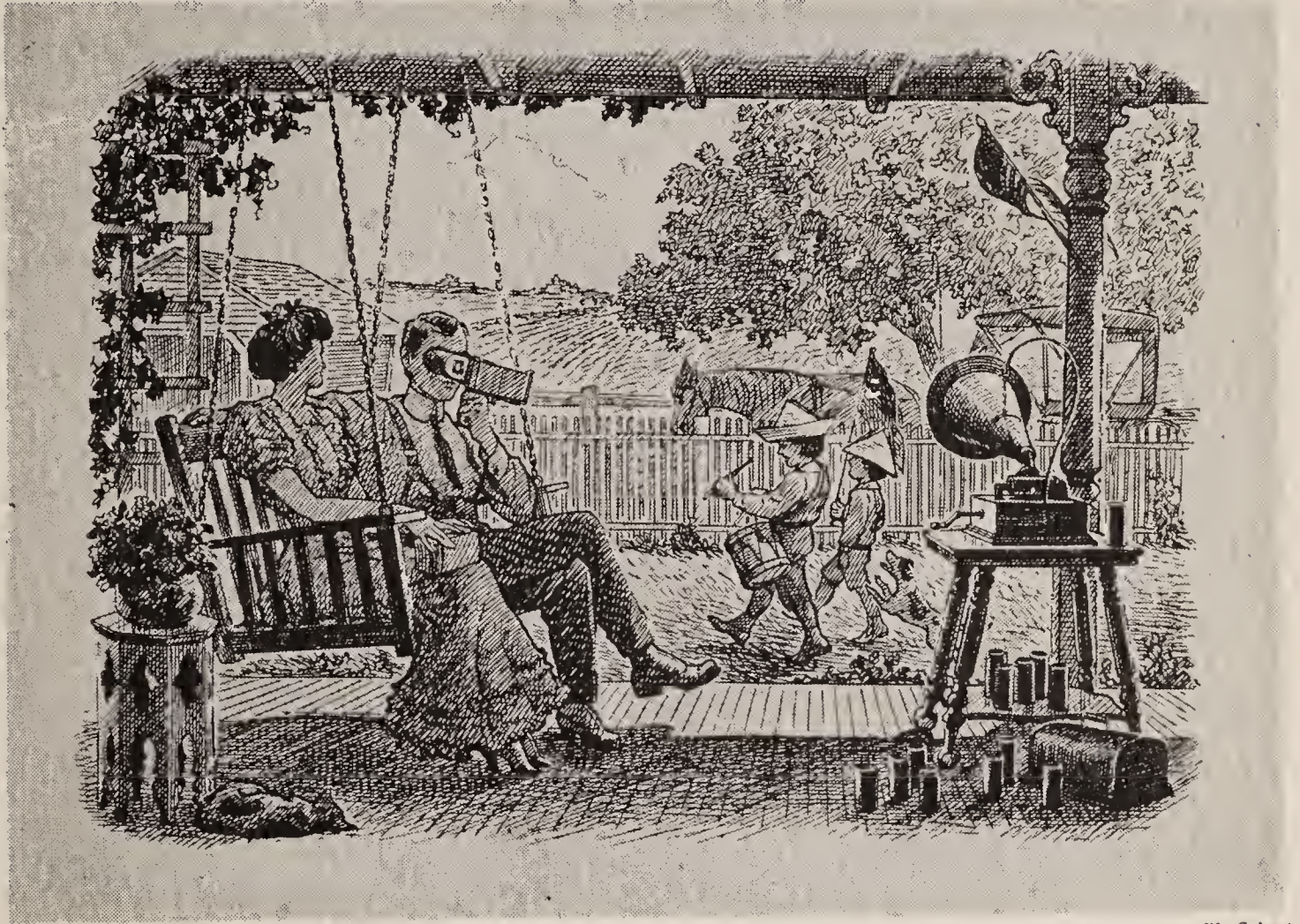
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Bind in cover

I Remember . . .



Drawing by Walter W. Calvert

Courtship of many a farm boy and girl in the horse-and-buggy days was aided and abetted by the stereoscope and the phonograph. If the tire and gas situation gets much worse, we may have to go back to them. How many of Our Folks have stereoscopes?

By
Mary Polk

I Remember . . .

By

Mary Polk

FOREWORD

"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation." These words of Henry David Thoreau hardly apply to the author of this book.

Mary Polk grew up on a farm near Hostyn, Texas and has lived on a farm near Weimar, Texas, since her marriage. The chores of farming, however, failed to keep her at home. She has been, in past years, very active in the Catholic Daughters of America and the St. Ann's Society. In 1949, both to socialize a bit more and to be able to buy a few more comforts for home, she became a dealer for Stanley Home Products, Inc., a job she still has today.

Her entertainment consists of, among other things, going to bingo parties in the Weimar vicinity several times a week. In the early '60's, she started making ceramics as a hobby and it turned into a small enterprise. Painting pictures was next on her list of accomplishments. She has also been busy making quilts, crocheting, and keeping a garden. Every year she supplies flowers to the church, rest homes, and the hospital and clinic.

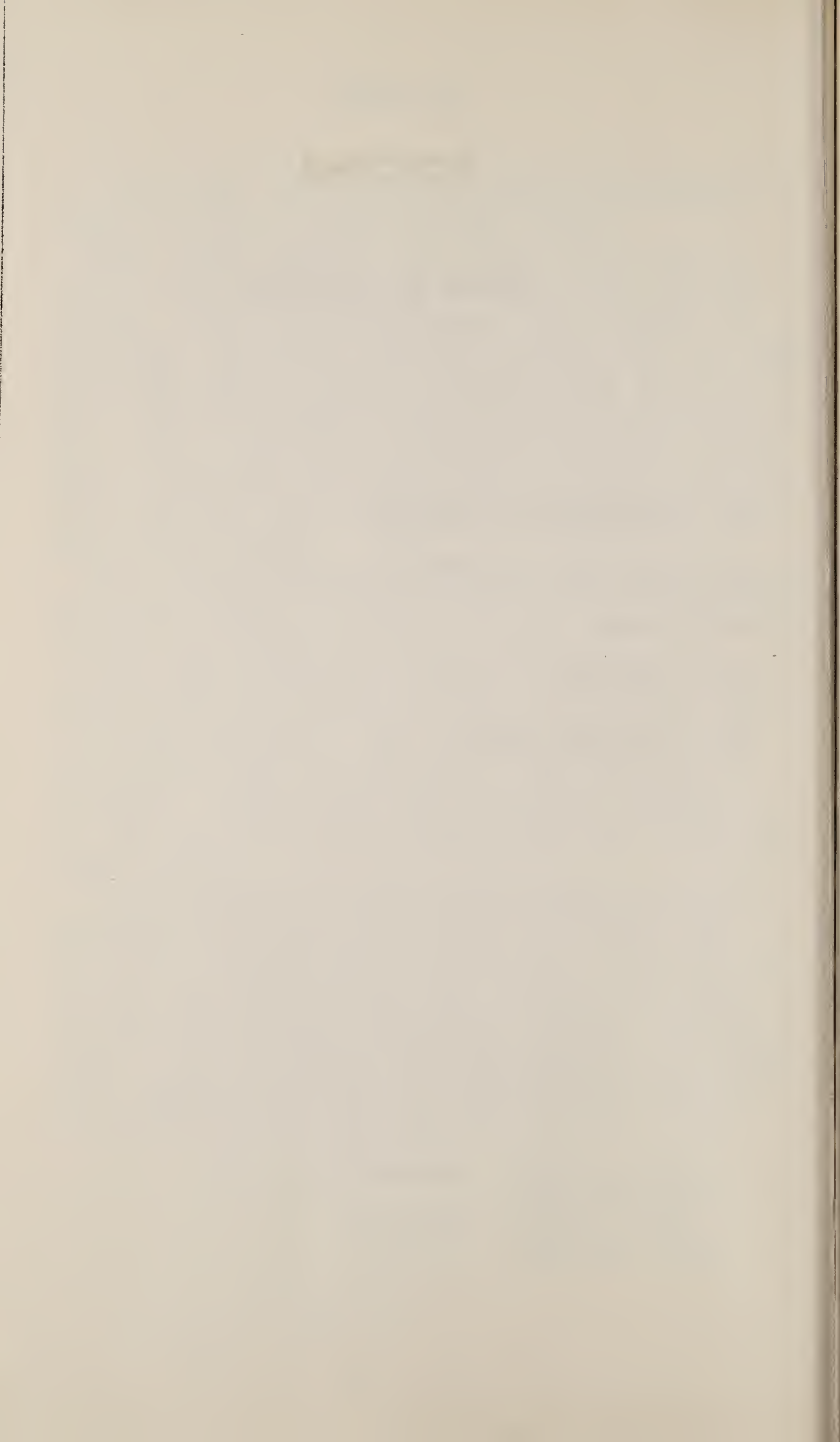
The writing of this book, another of her accomplishments, will be an interesting history of the early 1900's to those of us who are growing up in the space age and to those who will follow us. Things of this nature are easily forgotten unless written down. It is hoped that generations to come will find this book as interesting and informative as do the present generations.

Editors	Thomas Polk Joan Moeckel
Typists	Vlasta Polk Shirley Polk

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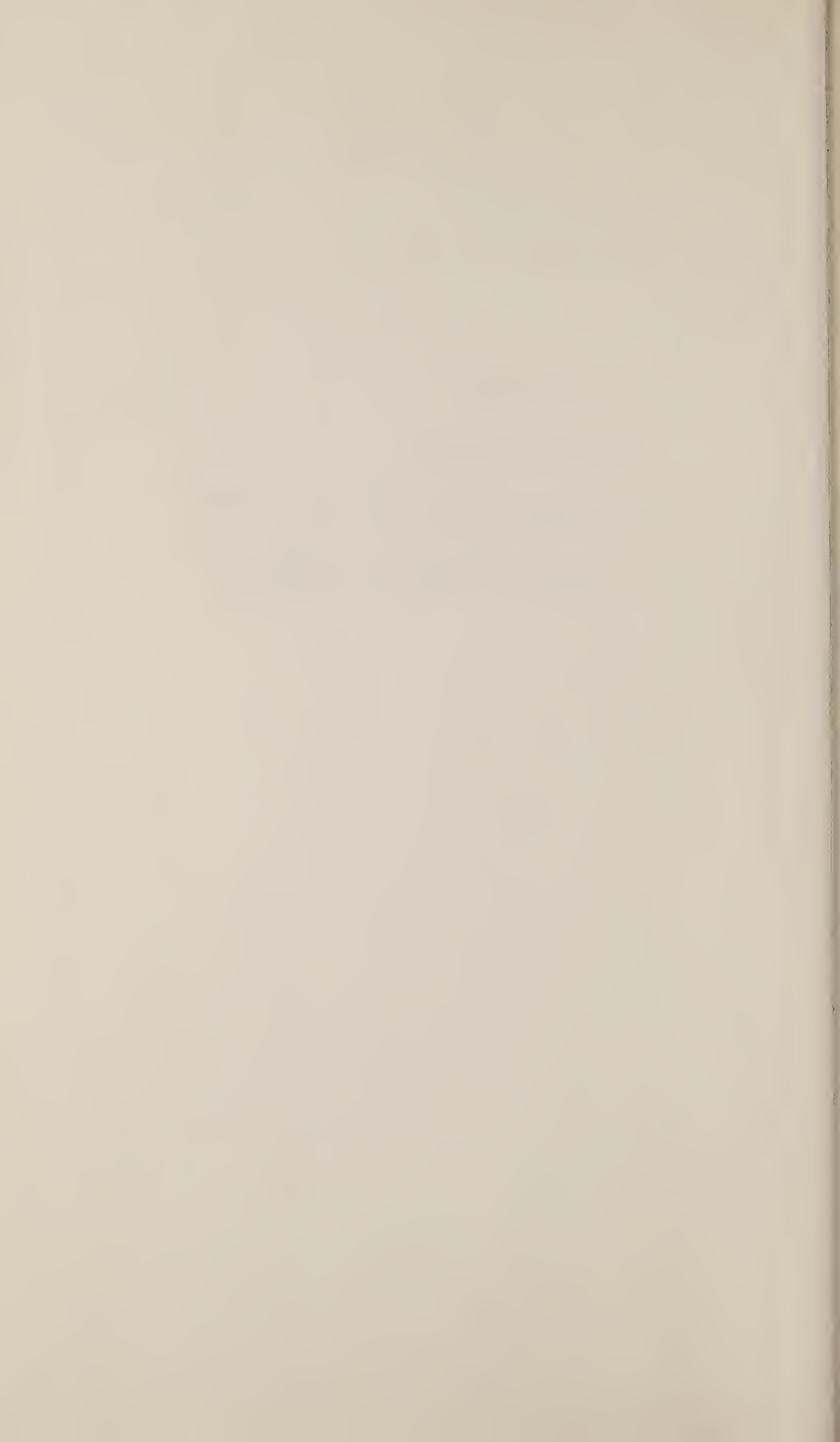
- I HISTORY OF FAMILY
- II LIVING CONDITIONS
- III FOOD
- IV TRAVEL
- V SOCIAL LIFE



I

HISTORY OF FAMILY

- a) History
- b) Family Tree
- c) Map of Hostyn Settlement
- d) Naturalization Paper of
Alois (Louis) Rainosek



I was supposed to get. I got some other little toy, and I had better not grumble or else. The baby was only about three months old. The next day when they moved on they thanked us and said they never expected to have such a nice Christmas Eve.

New Year's Eve was usually quiet, but sometimes a few neighbors gathered to see the old year out and new year in. At midnight salutes were fired, some with dynamite, others with shotguns or firecrackers.

In those days New Year's Eve meant to the youngfolks what Halloween means to them now. They would pull all kinds of stunts. The pranksters worked after midnight to make sure everybody was sound asleep.

There was one very peculiar farmer that usually caught the worst pranks. His gates were removed from the hinges and the gates laid across deep water in the creek and his wagon wheels were removed and hidden. Once they even pulled a buggy on top of a cow shed. Sometimes a horse would be saddled and hitched to the porch post, or other farm implements would be carried away, sometimes into a neighbor's yard.

If a boy would be visiting his girl friend and came there on horseback, the pranksters tried to get there before he left and turn the saddle around. They did everything imaginable.

AMUSEMENTS

There were very few amusements and the biggest pleasure people had was visiting one another. Often the visitors would come in the morning and spend the day. The whole family would go together to the same place.

There were a few dance halls but dances were not held too often: for the church feast, a 4th of July celebration, and maybe one or two more dances through the year. When there was a dance young and old alike enjoyed themselves. They danced till one

o'clock or later to the "oom-pah-pah oom-pah-pah" of the big bass horn when a brass band played or the "grrr-grrr" of the bull fiddle when a string band played. Sometimes people got into the dancing mood all of a sudden, and some old man with an accordion was asked to come play. The largest room in the house was cleared, furniture moved out, etc. A hat collection was taken up for the accordion player which amounted to about \$1.25 or \$2.00. Everybody went home tired and happy.



Sunday afternoon card game and wine sipping social. Left to right: Uncle Herman Rainosek and his brother-in-law Dietrich.

The old people also enjoyed going places. The whole family would go together on the wagon. If it was not very far, the whole family would walk. Often the older men got

professional cabinetmaker and found employment in Schulenburg. Marie Munster worked in La Grange as a servant girl. Her salary was either four or five dollars per month. The immigrants were called "greenhorns" and were made to work like slaves. A dollar looked like big money to them.



Julianna Munster, 60 years of age--taken in 1882 at C. Petersen Photograph Gallery, La Grange, Texas.



Ferdinand Munster, son of Julianna--taken by Alois Berger in Wein, II Ber. kleine Ankergasse 9, Austria, before 1878.



Left: Alois
Rainosek--taken at
Petersen's Photo-
graph Gallery, La
Grange, Texas,
before 1880

Below: Alois &
Marie Rainosek at
their retirement
home in Cedar, near
La Grange--taken
about 1923.

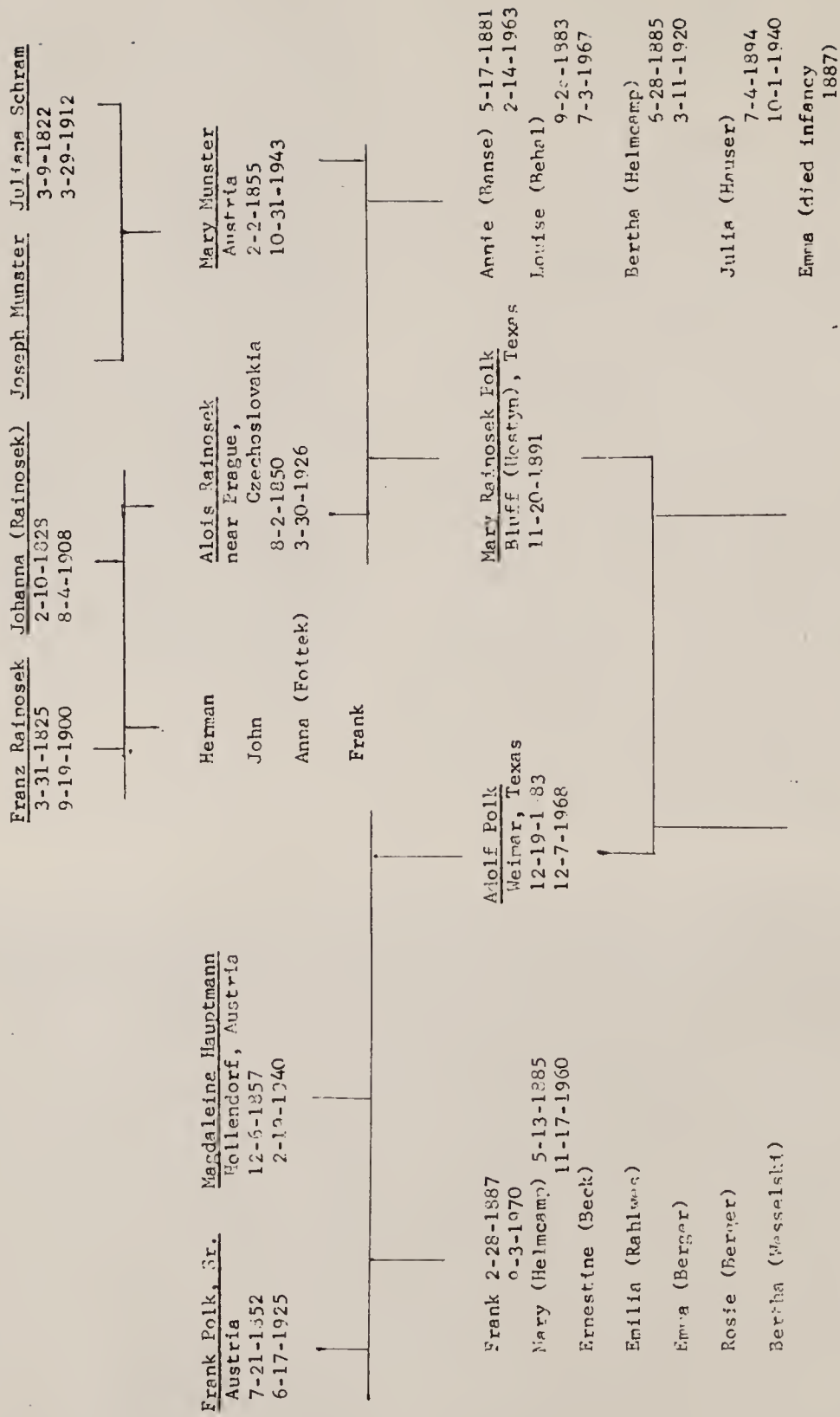


On May 11, 1880, Alois Rainosek and Marie Munster got married. They made their home in a very small house on the Bluff and farmed for a living. Their beginning was very modest. They had one chair and a bench to sit on and also had a cook stove and a few other essentials. After a few years, they bought a 130-acre farm in the Cedar community where they spent their married years up to their retirement. Land was cheap, usually around \$10.00 per acre. It was also very hard to make money in those days and people had to work to try to keep up with their payments. They paid down every year as much as they could and no pressure was used against them. In 1881 the family began to grow: Annie was born May 17, 1881; Louise, September 28, 1883; Bertha, June 27, 1885; Emma, 1887, died in infancy; Mary, November 20, 1891; and Julia, July 4, 1894. After the babies started to arrive grandmother Munster moved in with them and helped with the housework and the babies.

- - -



Mary and Adolf Polk--taken in 1961



Vlasta Shumbera (Polk)
Weimar, Texas
8-31-1921

Leroy James Polk, Sr.
Weimar, Texas
1-22-1918

Florence Polk (Janacek)
Weimar, Texas
6-30-1915

Herman Janacek
Hostyn, Texas
7-17-1911

Leroy James Polk, Jr.
Weimar, Texas
8-7-1942

Thomas Polk
Weimar, Texas
1-27-1945

Alfred Janacek
Weimar, Texas
8-31-1940

Joan Janacek (Moeckel)
Weimar, Texas
9-1-1943

Francis Janacek
Weimar, Texas
11-29-1944

Shirley Lemke (Polk)
Schulenburg, Texas
4-23-1943

Mary Marek (Janacek)
Fayetteville, Texas
6-30-1946

Clarence Moeckel
Columbus, Texas
4-1-1936

Pamala Dawn
Houston, Texas
8-19-1966

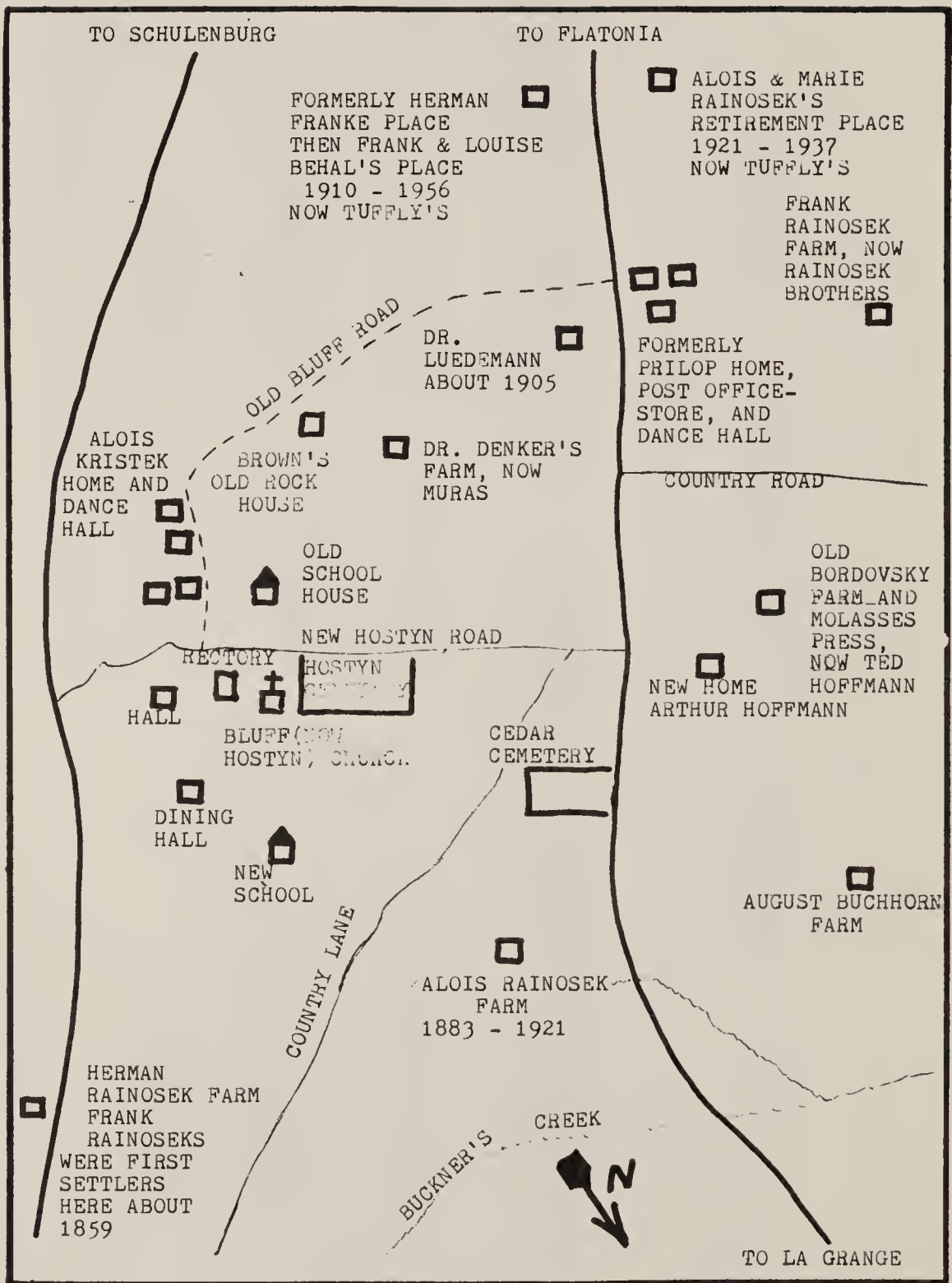
Patrick James
La Grange, Texas
9-10-1969

Amy Elizabeth
Columbus, Texas
4-14-1968

Michael James
Houston, Texas
3-28-1969

Angela Marie
La Grange, Texas
6-30-1971

Monte Joseph
Columbus, Texas
6-29-1971



THE STATE OF TEXAS, }

COUNTY OF FAYETTE.

COURT,

Term, A. D. 18

Josue Rimado a native of *Maracaibo* in the
County of *San Juan* of *Venezuela* aged *39* years, and bearing
allegiance to the *United States* of *America* who emi-
grated from the port of *San Juan* on or about the *1st* day of
Dec A. D. *1866*, and arrived at the port of *Galveston*
in the United States, on or about the *7th* day of *Nov* A. D. *1866*,
makes report of himself for NATURALIZATION and upon oath solemnly declares that it is his
boni-fide intention to become a citizen of the United States of America, and to reside within the
Government and under the jurisdiction of the same, and to renounce and abjure all allegiance
to every Foreign Prince *or* Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatsoever and particularly his alle-
giance to the *Monarchy* of *Spain*
of whom he was before a subject.

Josue Rimado

Sworn and subscribed to before me this the *1st* day of *Dec* A. D. *1866*

John F. C.

Clerk Court F. C.

By Deputy.

II

LIVING CONDITIONS

- a) Home Conveniences
- b) Water Wells
- c) Clothing
- d) Laundry
- e) Ironing
- f) Homemade Coals
- g) Lights
- h) Medical Care
- i) Bedbugs and Lice
- j) Farming
- k) Cut Ants
- l) Whistle While You Work

HOME CONVENIENCES

The country house was usually small with few windows, usually some sliding windows made out of wooden boards. The floors were often only sand and the walls were single. Ceilings did not exist. Many doors did not have doorknobs, some had a gadget that you could pull with a string from the outside to open the door and some had a little peg that you pushed in to lock.

Wood-burning cook stoves were the only means of getting food cooked. The wood supply for the summer usually was worked up during cold weather, with a cross-cut saw and an ax. Trees would be cut down and sawed up into blocks about eighteen inches long. Some were left whole to use in the heater while others had to be split up for the cook stove. To cook and bake on a wood stove was almost an art. When too little wood was on fire, the food wouldn't cook and too much fire would scorch it. Usually the stewpots were set in the holes on the stove on the open fire to make the food cook faster. The results were soot on the pots so hard to clean it was left on. The pots usually were hung on the wall behind the stove because there were no cabinets to put them in. In rainy weather, the dry wood supply would often run out and the wet wood was put in the oven to dry.

Because there were no sinks, dishes were washed in dishpans with not very much water as that had to be heated on the stove and also because it was hard work to carry water from the well into the kitchen. No detergents, only homemade lye soap, if anything at all, was used.

The dining table was covered with an oil cloth and on either side there was a bench for the mama and the kids to sit and papa had a chair at the head of the table.

There were no bathroom conveniences. A washbasin was used to wash your face and

and hands. Someplace in the kitchen or on the backporch, if there was one, was used for the washbasin and towels.

Bathtubs? People did not know what that was. Usually the boys went to a creek to take a bath and the girls squatted in a wash-tub in some outhouse. In the winter it was in the kitchen close to the cook stove where it was a little warm. Daily baths were impossible, that was on the schedule for Saturday night. Who would ever think of having a toilet in the house? That would be disgraceful. The lucky people had an outside privy, sometimes service for two. Often enough there wasn't even that much convenience. Sometimes a nearby cotton or corn field or a bush in the pasture served the purpose, or the cowpen shed or horse stable, especially in cold or rainy weather. Who would ever dream of buying toilet paper, even if it had been available, which it wasn't, economy would have spoken. Even newspaper was scarce and no mail order catalogs existed so corn-cobs were very efficient. When mail order catalogs were mailed that was very handy, but of course they had to run out of date first.

WATER WELLS

In those good old days you had very few conveniences, in fact, not any compared to these modern times. In those days when a family had a water well close by the house, that was considered a convenience. Many people hauled their water from nearby creeks in barrels, sometimes for miles. If the creek was not too far away, they would carry the water in buckets. The washing was done at the creek.

Those who had wells had to draw the water in buckets from the well. The well, about three feet in diameter, was dug by man. His helper had a "crank-a-roller" on which a rope and a bucket were fastened to pull up the dirt. Wells were usually from fifteen

to forty feet deep. The water was cool and usually good. When the well was finished a wooden box-like cover was built and set over the well on which a square U-shaped skeleton extended about four feet above the box. In the center a grooved wheel was fastened, either a rope or chain ran through on which a bucket was fastened to each end to draw up water. About 1900, probably a few years sooner, the windmill came into use. The wind turned the wheel on a high tower thirty or more feet high. When the wheel turned, the pump rod would go up and down, by doing so it pumped water. That was wonderful because pipes could then bring water into the kitchen and garden and wherever needed. Before the windmill, all the water had to be carried from the well to the garden if the vegetables needed watering. So the windmill did its duty for over fifty years. When electricity was obtainable, the electric pump soon came into use. Now there are very few windmills left in operation. There was one disadvantage to windmills: if there wasn't enough wind to turn the fan-shaped pedals on the top of the tower, the mill did not pump water. So now when you see a windmill by a farm house you might as well call it an antique.

CLOTHING

People in the early days were properly clothed. Men would have one suit which was worn only on Sundays to go to church and on special occasions. The pants were never pressed. The ladies had two, at the most three, Sunday dresses with long sleeves, a high neckline, and floor length style. There were no see-through dresses as everyone wore three or four petticoats, each one from three to five yards wide at the bottom. Ready-made dresses were out of the question. Material was bought and usually one in the family could sew well enough to make dres-



Mary and Julia Rainosek dressed in Sunday's best -- taken in 1910.

It took from seven to ten or more yards of material to make a dress, for summer dresses the material usually sold for ten to fifteen cents per yard. Woolen dress material was higher, so dresses had to last several years. Shoes for Sunday wear were bought in the store for \$1.00 or \$1.25 per pair, as for everyday and school shoes, many had them made by a cobbler. In the summer the cobbler would make the rounds of his customers and take measurements of their feet so he could have them done by the fall of the year. It was a much sturdier shoe than the factory-made shoe. During warm weather all the people walked barefooted, even in the hot summer when the sand was burning hot. People in those days had no trouble with corns.

School children wore shoes only in cold weather. People did not dress up in their Sunday best to go to town, especially not the men. They went dressed the way they were at home.

A certain man drove to town on his wagon. A merchant had a sale so he asked the farmer to come into the store because he wanted to show him some nice suits. The farmer bought a suit and on the way home an idea struck him: to surprise his wife he'll come home all dressed up. He stopped his horses on the riverbridge, took his old clothes off and threw them in the river. He reached for his suit he had bought, but to his surprise the suit was not there. It fell off the wagon - he had lost it. Was his wife surprised when he came home!

LAUNDRY

There were no washing machines nor detergents. Homemade lye soap was used for washing and scrubbing wood floors and ceilings. The soap was cooked in large iron wash pots. The ingredients were lye, bacon skins and water. At first lye balls were available, but later concentrated lye in cans was used. Before these, lye water was made from ashes that were taken from the cookstove and heater and put in a barrel. Then water was added, the ashes would settle on the bottom of the barrel and in a few days there was strong lye. This lye water was used to make soap. The soap was rubbed on the clothes and the clothes were either rubbed by hand or on a washboard by those who owned one. Some had homemade washboards. The first washing machines had a kind of a crank on top of the lid which had to be pulled back and forth. Later ball-bearings helped the push-pull motion work easier. Compare with the electric washing machine which was introduced on the farms around 1940 when farmers

were able to get rural electrification. At first a wringer-type machine was on the market. Now the machines are so improved it just takes the push of a button to turn the water into the machine, wash, automatically drain it, add rinsing water and when done the clothes come out practically dry.

IRONING

The ironing was not easy. All the Sunday clothes had to be starched stiff. The flat-iron was a V-shaped piece of heavy iron. Some were solid iron with a handle across the top and some were an empty shell into which a hot iron piece was slipped. Sometimes the irons would be too hot, then not hot enough. The irons were placed on the cookstove to get hot, or sometimes on the coals inside the stove. Later a clay bucket was invented and hot coals were put into it for heating the irons. As the coals died down more were added. The irons got black with soot and cedar twigs were used to clean them. Then there usually was a meatskin on a rag to rub the iron over to make it smooth. If there was just a little soot overlooked, it got on the clothes and they had to be washed again. How disgusting that was. Compare that with the modern electric iron, no soot, no heating of coals in a bucket, just plug in and go.

HOMEMADE COALS

Most of the people bought their coals for their clay buckets to heat the irons. There were some who peddled coals, but my father made his own. He operated a small blacksmith shop where he repaired his farm implements and sharpened his sweep and plow points. He needed coals for his furnace. Bellows were used to produce a strong current of air to make the coals burn to get red hot. The plow

points, etc., were placed among the hot coals until red hot, then removed with long tongs, placed on an anvil and hammered with a sledge hammer to a thin cardboard thickness, then plunged into water for seasoning. My father was an expert in making his own coals and always had plenty on hand. Wood, preferably live oak, would be cut in short lengths, piled on a huge pile and set on fire. When it burned down to coals, the pile was covered with sand. The sand smothered the fire and the coals cooled. Hard work, but it saved money.

LIGHTS

Most of the immigrants used candles for light. They made the candles of beeswax or tallow. Soon candles were replaced by oil-burning lamps. The lamps had to be refilled quite often and if a little breeze hit the lamp, the chimney would get black with soot, so messy to clean. Often the lamp chimney cracked and if there wasn't a spare on hand, there just wasn't any light until the next trip to town which was probably two or three weeks away. In later years some used gasoline lamps. When electric power came to the farm, between 1940 and 1950, that was a blessing. Now very few farmers are without electric lights and modern appliances.

MEDICAL CARE

There usually was a country doctor available when needed. The doctor's day call was \$1.00 and \$2.00 for night calls, and he sometimes traveled several miles one way. A doctor was not very busy for people did not have the money to spend and did not call him unless absolutely necessary. At first all the home remedies were tried, Epsom salts and castor oil for constipation, quinine for fever, tea for all kinds of ailments. For

a sore throat, a slice of bacon sprinkled with turpentine was placed on a piece of cloth and wrapped around the neck. The same treatment was applied to the foot for anyone stepping on a rusty nail - tetanus seldom developed. Midwives would take care of childbirth. A doctor was never called unless absolutely necessary. Fee was \$2.00 or \$3.00. There were no check-ups by a doctor before or after a baby was born. Doctors traveled with horse and buggy or horseback. Operations were unheard of before the turn of the century. Malaria fever was very common; if contracted in the early summer it was hard to get rid off before the fall of the year.

In case a child would have jaundice, a string of garlic was hung around his neck. That was supposed to be a cure for it. Boils were very common in the summer. They were very painful. Some were as large as a cup. The home remedy for that was a paste made of sweet cream and flour and applied as a plaster. For other infections such as a barbed wire scratch or rusty nail wound a thick starch would be cooked and turpentine added, then it would be applied to the wound. For scratches and sores, axle grease (used for greasing wagons and buggy axles) was the best remedy.

There was a colored family living near my parents' farm. Late one evening some of them came running to our house saying a centipede bit one of them and they wanted to go in the cowpen for some warm cow dunk to apply to the sting. They did and the dangerous bite was taken care of.

One of the biggest epidemics that struck this community was the Asian Flu in 1920. There was not one single family that was spared. Pneumonia set in very easily, and with no hospitals or professional help, many people died. The doctors made their rounds every day, going from house to house on horseback or buggy as the roads were so boggy

due to much rain that automobiles could not make it. There were no highways or gravel roads, the blackland roads got so bad that they were impassable. February and March of 1920 were the worst.

BEDBUGS & LICE

The houses were mostly one room and a kitchen, no screens. In the summer when doors and windows were open, it was also open house for flies, mosquitoes, cats, dogs, and chickens. It was not unusual if a hen laid her eggs someplace in the house. That would not be so bad, but finally chicken mites infested her nest, and were hard to get rid of.

In those days there were no insecticides and it was hard to kill pests of which there were many kinds. For example, the bedbug, which is a small reddish brown flat blood-sucking insect, that lived in beds, walls, and floorcracks and would come out at night and attack the people when they slept. Its bite itched, and they multiplied very quickly and were hard to get rid of. On housecleaning day all the beds would be taken outside where a kettle of water would be boiling, with that all the beds would be scalded. There were no mattresses in those days. Two widths of material were sewn together the length of the bed to make a huge sack. That was filled either with hay or corn shucks. So when it was bedbug killing day the sack was also boiled and then filled with fresh shucks or hay. Seems that should have done the job, but in a few days the pests were invading again, usually there would be some overlooked in the wall or floor. They laid eggs the size of sharp pencil point in large numbers. Kerosene (coal oil) was used sometimes to try to kill them but it was not very effective. It was not very unusual if you saw a bedbug crawling on a person. How thankful we should be that we can go to bed without being bothered throughout the whole

night with those miserable pests. There was not a home that did not have them, so it was no disgrace.

There was another miserable pest, the head louse. There were very few people who did not have them. It is a small insect that infests the hair and skin of people. It is a little bit larger than the small sugar ant and greyish in color. They would also lay eggs and multiply quickly. The best remedy in those days was to wash the hair and pour kerosene oil all over the head, but usually it did not get all so there were plenty left for a new crop.

Dr. Molner, The Houston Post, discusses the head lice, 1968: Head lice exist and children get them (also adults) and it isn't too uncommon. Often they get them from a playmate, perhaps by exchanging headgear. There are two principles for the recurring problem. First there may be reinfections from the original source. Second you may get rid of the lice but not the nits (eggs) which hatch a new batch. Sometimes it is necessary to cut the hair short until you rout the pests. One old but effective remedy is to soak the scalp in a mixture of kerosene and vinegar, half and half. Then bandage the head for several hours. The mixture not only kills the lice but dissolves the substance that holds the nits to the hair which is the way head lice lay their nits or eggs, attaching them to the hair with a sticky material. Hair should be shampooed daily, combed with a fine comb to remove the nits until there is no sign of recurrence.

"Haderlouse" (raglouse) was another pest. I have never seen any but I was told they were very hard to get rid of. They would live in the clothes, were the size of chicken mites and also were blood-sucking insects, and even washing the clothes would not kill them. All this may sound ridiculous but it is true, and the poor people in those days had to work hard for a living and did the best they knew how to try to get rid of pests and keep their homes clean.

FARMING

The work was not easy for the immigrants as it was so different from their homeland and the summer heat was almost unbearable. However they tried to make the best of it and they were healthy and happy. To make a living the family planted cotton and corn. They



Herd of Cattle - taken near Woodsboro, Texas

also raised cattle, hogs and chickens. Cotton and cattle sales were the only cash income, cotton brought from six to eight cents a pound. Around 1910 it went up to ten to fifteen cents. Cattle also were cheap a yearling would sell for about four dollars,

cows about seven dollars. Occasionally ranchers would come around to buy cattle and horses then they would hire a few horseback riders and drive a herd of horses or cattle from farm to farm collecting whatever they had bought on their route. Some herds were very large consisting of about one to two hundred head and led by either a covered wagon or horseback riders. The horses and cows would follow. There were some riders on each side and in back to keep them from straying. Farmers could sell or buy from these herds. Hogs were usually only raised for their own use to butcher in the winter. Sausage was made and smoked, ham and bacon was heavily salted and put in the barrel and left there about ten days, then it was hung up in the smoke house to be smoked for two weeks or more, depending on size and quantity of smoke. Sometimes it was hard to get good smoke, usually corn cobs, rotted wood or green cedar was used to make good smoke. Hickory wood was preferred but hard to find. On the farm bacon had to last through the summer, likewise hog lard. Hog lard was rendered when hogs were butchered.

Butter and eggs were very cheap. Often the merchant would not even buy them and the farmer had to take them back home disappointed, as he had hoped to make a few cents.

The average farmer had from thirty to fifty hens. There were no hatcheries in the early days. The hens had to do the hatching. After a hen laid a certain number of eggs she would become broody; if young chickens were wanted, about 20 to 25 eggs were put under the broody hen. She stayed in her nest until the chicks hatched. In three weeks time you could hear the "peep peep" of the chick. Then it broke the shell and mam cluck was happy with her chicks. Of course, you made sure you had a rooster on the place, otherwise, no chicks.

The first immigrants worked their land with oxen. The process was very slow, therefore, only limited acreage could be cultivated. The plow was homemade, it had a very heavy

beam. The yoke for the oxen was also home-made. Oxen did not have a harness like horses. The yoke was a heavy piece of live oak wood about five feet long, closed at each end. Two holes were bored and a U-shaped limb of a tree was inserted. The U was placed around the neck of the ox, a heavy chain attached in the middle of the cross bar and the chain fastened to the plow, with that they would pull the plow. There were no lines to guide them. The rope that was on the horns of one of the oxen was for safety to hold them just in case they would get uncontrollable. Oxen understood their commands. If they were told "Gee" they would turn right, "Haw", left. When they got tired they would lie down even in the middle of the row.



Frank Behal, Sr. disc plowing with his mule team. Taken about 1910 or earlier.

By the turn of the century most of the farmers worked their land with horses and mules.

They worked faster and more land could be cultivated.

Usually farmers sold or traded horses to one another. Sometimes it happened that a farmer needed a horse and could not find one. If a farmer could spare one of his horses for a few days, he would let his neighbor use it until he caught up with his plowing.

Horse trading could be risky, too, at times. There were professional horse traders. One very prominent trader lived in Schulenburg. Some days he and his hired helper would take several horses and go down the road stopping by most of the farms to try to make a sale or trade. One day this trader tried to sell a horse to a man who was interested. He told him, "The horse eats good, pulls good, but don't look good". The farmer with plenty of feed on hand thought he can feed him up and make him look good, so he bought the horse rather cheap. After a few days he found the horse was blind, so he went to the horse trader and the trader grinned and said, "I told you the horse eats good, pulls good, but don't look good".

About 1920 the first tractors were bought in this community, and by 1950 very few farmers used horses or mules for farming, all changed over to tractors and modern machinery. Cattle and horses are now hauled on trailers. Horses are only used for pleasure, horseback riding for those who can afford to own a horse. What a difference in less than a hundred years from oxen to horses, tractors, cars, and airplanes.

Tractors are very dangerous and have to be handled wisely. A tractor can pitch if given a chance. In 1961 Ponko (Grandpa, Adolf Polk) was riding the tractor in the pasture, he hit a hole in the ground and the tractor pitched him off and kept running aiming for a deep waterhole in the creek, Ponko could not stop it so it plunged in deep water and could not even be seen. Results, Ponko had a dislocated shoulder. When the tractor was finally rescued from its watery grave and the water

drained from the engine it was in running condition.



Frank Behal, Sr. disc plowing.

The farmer's plight improved over the years, however, reverses such as crop failure due to drouth or tropical storms were still a threat. In the early years of 1900 the boll weevils infested the cotton fields. When a boll weevil pricks a cotton square the tiny bud of the cotton flower, it turns yellow, wilts and falls off the cotton bush. It was the impression of the farmers that if all those fallen-off squares would be gathered and burned the boll weevils could be exterminated, so the whole family from five-year old up went to the field and picked up the squares and burned them. That was done for weeks with no results. The weevils hatched in the cotton bolls as well, cotton crops were cut short.

Then there were several very bad tropical storms. On Sept. 8, 1900 a storm ruined the

cotton crop, tore up buildings, trees, etc. Again in 1909, 1915, and 1921 were very bad storms. In 1921 the cotton crop was practically destroyed and what was left was of poor grade and brought only about six cents per pound, some of it less. In 1925 there was a very bad drouth. Corn crop was a total failure, hay had to be shipped in from the northern states and cotton crops were very short. It was not easy for the farmers to keep going.

In 1931 the depression hit, another rough few years. When that was whipped things started to improve. Farmers bought tractors and other farm implements to make farm work easier and quicker.



John Banse's cotton patch. Left to right: Willie Rainosek, John Banse, Annie Banse with son Edgar Banse, taken in August, 1912.

Farm labor was hard to get, people did not want to do farm work, many went to the city to work.

Cotton farming in this community is almost

a thing of the past, cotton allotment is chiefly the cause of that, so now the small cotton farmer is out, only those who can farm on a big scale can exist. Usually their farm implements consist of two or three tractors with all modern equipment - cotton and corn pickers, hay balers, etc. In the earlier years farmers would cut all the corn tops, tie them in bundles, stack them up, and when dry enough they were hauled in and stacked up in large stacks. Cane and hay was very seldom baled, even though there was a baler available, it was hauled in loose and handled with pitchforks. When cotton was the major farm income the cotton gins were kept very busy. Farmers would get up at three o'clock in the morning to feed their horses and then go to gin their bale of cotton. The wagons were lined up sometimes thirty or more by the gin. There used to be gins in the country and every town had two or three gins. It took at least one hour to gin a bale of cotton until modern equipment was installed. Now a bale of cotton can be ginned in fifteen minutes. Farmers also used to pick cotton by hand with a long sack slung over the shoulder putting the cotton in by handfulls. When the sack was full it was taken to the end of the row and weighed. Usually it weighed from thirty to sixty pounds, then it was emptied in a wagon with a high bed. A good cotton picker could pick up to 350 pounds a day. It took about 1500 pounds of raw cotton to make a bale. Now hardly any cotton is picked by hand. The machine can pick several bales in a day.

About December every farmer would start selecting the best ears of corn for seed to be planted in spring. The ears had to be large, with full grown kernels and straight rows. Often one farmer would exchange seed with another farmer believing it to be a good idea. There was no hybrid corn seed for sale. Same goes for cotton seed. There were no varieties, cotton was cotton. About 1910 or so the cotton seed breeders came out with all

kinds of seed - Mebane, Qualla, Rowden King, and many others. If a farmer had a good cotton crop, nice big bolls, he would let his friends exchange seed with him at the gin. Usually every farmer wanted the seed of one bale to supply his needs for the spring planting.

Cane seed was also grown at home. The heads of the cane were cut off when thoroughly dry. A wagon sheet (tarpaulin) would be spread on



Beating the grain with this flail was the job of the whole family at harvest time. The wooden poles joined with a rawhide lacing, were made about 1850 in Illinois. (The Houston Post, Jan. 11, 1970.)

level ground, the cane heads put on the sheet and beaten with a flail, an instrument for threshing grain by hand. A flail consists of a long wooden handle with a short wooden club fastened at one end with a rawhide lacing. Beating the grain with a flail was the job of the whole family, dirty and dusty job, hard work, too.

Cucumber seed was selected from the best cucumbers. They had to be long and straight. When they turned a dark yellow they were picked off the vine and brought home. When they started to shrivel, they were cut open and the seeds taken out, washed and dried.

Same goes for tomatoes, lettuce, all varieties of beans, watermelons and canteloupes. Seeds would be saved every year to save money buying seed.

CUT ANTS

Another enemy of the farmer was the cut ant. Cut ants or night ants as they were sometimes called have long been serious pests in many sections of the state. They do extensive damage to gardens, field crops, flowers, truck crops, and forestry seedlings. The cut ants resemble red ants, just a little smaller in size. Sandy soil farms were usually the most infested.

When a colony of ants migrate they start building their castle where the queen will live. They dig a deep hole, about 20 to 30 feet, by carrying the dirt to the top and build a cone-shaped hill high around the entrance and tapering off to the ground level. This cone-shaped hill protects them from water entering into their living quarters during rainy weather.

Ordinarily their schedule is night work. It is unbelievable how much they can accomplish in one night. When their castle is completed they begin storing food for the winter. This is when the trouble begins on the farms. Usually they migrate into fields

where they have access to crops as the seeds come up.

It is very interesting to watch cut ants work. Some crawl up the plant and cut the leaves off, the leaves are large and they will cut them into small pieces. Then the workers will load a piece on their head and take it into their winter storage room, unload, and return for more. If the load is too heavy to carry, the ant will go backwards and drag its load. Cut ants are very courteous. Meeting each other they will bow their heads then continue on their journey.

They are very hard to get rid of. In the early days, say around 1900, there were no insecticides of any kind to kill insects. My parents' farm was sandy soil so we had our share of trouble. Usually in spring on a cool day when the ants stayed home, we would declare war on the ants. Dad would rig his bellows from his blacksmith shop on a scaffold, load it on a sleigh, hitch a horse to it and take off for the ant infested field. Next step was to locate the main entrance. There were many outlets or arteries from the main hill leading over a large area covering many acres. Once the main hill was located, a hole was dug about two feet deep and two feet in diameter which was filled with kindling, blacksmith coal and topped with rock sulfur. When the coal got red hot the hole had to be covered with a heavy tin which had a hole in the center through which a hose was inserted leading from the bellows and covered airtight with sand all around. All this accomplished, Dad would start working the bellows, before long smoke would be coming out of all the branch ant holes over a large area. Now the whole family was busy stumping holes closed where smoke came out. The coal and sulfur produced a poisonous fume and killed the ants if no fresh air reached them. Usually some stayed alive. If only one queen escaped there would soon be a new colony. The queen ants lay the eggs by the

thousands. The reason for stumping the holes closed was to prevent the fumes from escaping.

In 1950 Texas A & M College found a new method of control which they said is easy and cheap to apply with good results. The new method was to fumigate the cut ant colony with methyl bromite. This is a liquid and has to be poured into the ant hill hole. The fumes are very poisonous and humans are warned against inhaling the fumes. In addition to killing all the ants in the colony the gas destroys the fungus on which the young ants feed, and the ants that hatch later are starved. Cut ants will destroy acres of vegetation and even cut leaves off the trees.

WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

Seems the art of whistling has died. In old bygone days about the turn of the century people, in spite of hardships, seemed to have been in a much happier state of mind. Reflecting on the past one assumes they tried to sing or whistle their worries away.

Almost without exception, old and young, male and female would sing and whistle. Men riding horseback, single or in groups, would sing or whistle. Riding a wagon, probably going to gin with a load of cotton, riding the cultivator or walking behind a plow you could hear singing or whistling. Likewise, by chopping and picking cotton, the louder we sang the faster we worked. Children walking to school would sing or whistle.

A good whistler had meaning to his whistle. A horse understood a certain pitch which meant "go", another would call the dog, cows or horses, and even the children. My father could put out such a loud whistle that was only second to a steam engine whistle. He would put his two little fingers in his puckered mouth and let go a good call whistle. There is a certain pitch used as a comment, probably on a job well done. A good whistler could also warble and imitate birds.

Boys and girls learned to whistle through cupped hands. You could do bird imitations in this style, especially good for producing the cry of a hoot owl.

A good singer could yodel, sing a song and yodel the chorus. When at a social gathering, such as weddings, and dances, when the men had a few beers they would feel real happy and start to sing.

Food for thought, singing and whistling is a good remedy to keep you well and happy. Worth trying.

III

FOOD

- a) Food
- b) Bread
- c) Coffee
- d) Homemade Syrup and Molasses
- e) Vinegar and Wine
- f) Sauerkraut
- g) Butter and Cheese

FOOD

Food was very plain, no **desserts**, and cakes only on special occasions. The breakfast menu was cornbread or flour bread, bacon and molasses or butterbread. Dinner in the spring included Irish potatoes, vegetables and bacon or on Sunday maybe beef. Supper was mashed potatoes and vegetables or corn mush or cornbread and milk or clabbered milk, this menu was kept till in the fall when the dinner menu changed to sweet potatoes, sauerkraut and **pork**. People did not buy beef in town. There were country butchers, some had several wagons equipped with a box that held the meat and a scale, they always took the same route, if you wanted beef you would have to go to the road and wait for the butcherwagon. In the winter there was often a soup on the menu and sometimes blackeyed peas. Rice and prunes were a Sunday dish. Coffee or milk was the only beverage served in the early days.

There usually was a grist mill close around, corn meal would be ground every Saturday, usually the corn for grinding was taken to the mill on horseback or buggy, however it was a common sight to see a man carry a sack with corn slung over his shoulders.

Corn meal was used to make cornbread. Flour usually was bought in the fall of the year in a 100 pound barrel, that should always last until late in the summer, and it did with cornbread, sweet and Irish potatoes substituting for bread many times.

People often did not have a quarter or fifty cents to buy beef so they went rabbit, squirrel and dove hunting. There were no closed seasons on wildlife. When you are hungry for meat and have no money a rabbit tasted pretty good.

BREAD

In the early days when people hardly knew what bakery-baked bread was, a large loaf sold for five cents. Every housewife baked bread for the family. This was more work than it is now. There was no fresh yeast to buy, every housewife made her own yeast cakes. To make the yeast cakes, hops had to be cooked. Dried hops could be bought in packages. Irish potatoes were also cooked after they were grated, then the water of the hops was poured on. A little sugar and enough cornmeal was added to make a stiff dough. This was rolled out like cookies, cut in squares then dried in the sun. About three were used to start the sponge for making bread. In some pastures the hop trees grew wild and the housewife saved money not having to buy dried hops. The trees did not grow very tall as they were more of a shrub. The hops are about the size of a quarter with hard seed in the center, green at first and when ripe a greenish yellow. They grow in clusters and are ready to pick in the early summer. People would pick enough to last the year.

Baking bread in a wood stove was tricky. If the oven got too hot the bread would burn black, and not much could be done about it. If there wasn't enough wood on fire it would not be brown. Some people used kerosene stoves as the heat on them could be regulated, but they were more dangerous.

Now in 1968 and for years past all you need to do is to set the heat of the oven on the desired temperature, and the bread will never burn, how wonderful the electric stoves are. No dirt or soot to put up with, no wood or kindling to carry in the kitchen, no ashes to take out of the stove and no burned-through stove pipes to replace, no wood to cut and split and no black bottom pots hanging on the wall.

COFFEE

In those early days instant or ground coffee was unheard of. When ground coffee was introduced on the market very few people bought it, for the simple reason that it is not pure coffee. They preferred buying coffee beans in the green stage. The beans were ripe but green in color, then the beans had to be roasted in the oven and great care had to be taken not to burn them. If they were overdone the coffee tasted bitter.

When roasted coffee was available, many gave up roasting the green coffee beans. Coffee was cooked in tea kettles and then strained with a strainer into a coffee pot. If you did not have a strainer you would let it set awhile so the coffee grounds would settle at the bottom, then pour it easily into the coffee can (coffee pot). The coffee had to be ground up in a coffee mill which usually was attached to the kitchen wall. To get all the flavor out of the coffee grounds, it was left in the teapot for several days and boiled over and over with some fresh coffee added. When percolators first came on the market people did not buy them because they used too much coffee. But gradually nearly everybody was using them. Then came the electric percolators, again easier and now instant coffee and tea are very popular.

HOMEMADE SYRUP AND MOLASSES

Molasses was made from the juice of sugar cane, which was planted in the spring. When the seed or heads turned brown the cane was ripe and ready to use to make syrup. The first step was to strip all the leaves off, either by hand or the use of clubs. Then the cane was cut down with butcher knives or sickles and laid neatly on piles and then the seed heads would be cut off. When all this was completed it was loaded on a wagon and hauled to the molasses or cane press,

which was usually not far away.

My Grandfather Rainosek owned one of the first molasses presses. It was homemade out of three live oak blocks about fifteen inches in diameter and eighteen inches long. The blocks had to be stripped of bark and planed to make them very smooth all around. A hole was bored in the center of each block through which a large pin was driven. These pins were fitted into cogwheels and placed on a platform stand and fastened together by an iron plate so close together that you could not even see a crack. Then a long tongue was attached to which a horse was hitched. The horse had to walk around and around in a circle moving the cogwheels and the blocks. The cane was stuck in between the rollers, feeding the press. Tin with a round, scoop-like snoot was attached underneath the rollers which caught the cane juice on the opposite side of the press and drained it into a large barrel.



Herman Rainosek's molasses press--taken about 1912.

To get the molasses, the juice had to be cooked. A large furnace was built out of stone or bricks, about six by twenty feet. On this would rest a large tin pan about the size of the furnace. It was divided into two sections—the first section contained the fresh juice, when partially done it was moved into section two and cooked slowly until done. The owner had to work very often late at night to get the juice cooked because it would sour if kept over for the next day. Charges were usually ten cents per gallon for cooking, if you did the press work and used your horses. The average farmer would try to have up to thirty-five gallons of molasses every year, depending on the size of the family. In later years the rollers were replaced by metal rollers and then, in place of horses, gasoline motors were installed. Cooking molasses had to be learned, for if not cooked long enough it would sour and had to be cooked over. If overdone it got to the stage that it would hardly pour.

VINEGAR AND WINE

People made their own vinegar out of cane juice. The raw juice would be put in a closed barrel with only a hole bored for pouring the juice in. Then it was brought to a fermenting stage by adding sugar and when it stopped fermenting more sugar was added until the juice was clear and sour. Vinegar was also made from mustang grapes using the same procedure. This vinegar would be clear red in color.

Ripe mustang grapes make very good wine. The grapes are washed, put into a barrel or crock, and mashed with a heavy mallet. Water is added and when it gets to the fermenting stage the grapes come to the top. The juice is then drained into another container and sugar is added. This is repeated several times until the wine is clear and of

good taste. Then it is put into bottles and stored for future use.

SAUERKRAUT

The family garden was not complete if it did not have a large patch of cabbage, which was mainly planted to make sauerkraut. On sauerkraut-making day several members of the family were kept busy. Some would bring the cabbage, others would trim off the bad leaves and usually the papa would do the shredding on a cabbage shredder. Grapevines with green grapes would be placed on the bottom of a wooden barrel—usually ten, fifteen, or twenty-five gallon barrels were used. The shredded cabbage would be salted and packed tightly into the barrels, with an occasional grape vine in between. When the barrel was full, a cloth was put over the kraut. A round board was placed over the cloth and weighted down with a heavy rock. In a few days it would start to ferment. The cloth had to be rinsed out in clean water and replaced daily. After a few days sugar water was added to make it really sour. Making forty gallons of sauerkraut wasn't unusual. When the sauerkraut was sour to taste, the top of the barrel would be replaced and sealed tight, so it would keep for winter use. In the fall a barrel would be opened and sauerkraut was on the daily menu.

BUTTER AND CHEESE

Another important thing was to supply the needs of the family with butter. Every family had milk cows that were milked by hand every morning and night. The milk was strained into pans and let stand until the cream came to the top. At that time the milk would clabber and the cream had to be skimmed off. The clabber milk was heated on the stove until medium hot. It was then poured into a cloth bag and hung on a tree

branch or clothesline to dry out the whey which made cottage cheese. If cooked cheese was wanted the cottage cheese would be crumbled in a dish and set aside to age until it had quite a strong smell. Salt and caraway seed was added. Butter would be put in a sauce pan and the cheese added and cooked for a few minutes. Then it was poured into bowls, cooled and was ready to smear on bread for buttered bread and cheese. The whey was saved for the hogs, as was the remainder of the clabber milk. Many people ate clabber milk with bread or cornbread for a meal.



Alfred Janacek in back of the old Janacek home in Weimar, Texas--taken about 1944.

The cream was kept for several days until there was enough to make butter. There were no iceboxes or refrigerators so some people who had wells put their butter dishes and cream in buckets, tied on a rope and lowered them into the water well (above water) to be kept cool. Butter churns varied in size from one to five gallons. They were made out of stone similar to clay. The cream was put in and then churned with a device consisting of a broom handle with a cross of wood at one end to churn the butter. This had to be worked up and down and usually spattered all over the floor. Cats and dogs would be watching for every spatter to lick it off the floor. When the butter was ready it was put in a dish and cool water added to wash out the buttermilk. The water had to be changed several times until it stayed clear, then salt was added to the butter which was put in bowls. Some people would drink the buttermilk or use it for making cornbread. The unused buttermilk was given to the hogs.

When the first ice cream was put on the market a man sampled it. He liked it very much and wanted to take some home for his wife, so he had some put in a paper bag. When he wanted to give it to his wife, to his surprise, the paper bag was empty. Ice cream is also made from fresh milk.

When milking a cow, you had to sit on a stool and hold the bucket between your legs. Sometimes a cow would kick and throw you over with the milk spilling all over you. On top of this you were lucky if there wasn't some soft cowpie (dung) just in back of you to fall in. Then the farmers started using milking machines and now very few cows are milked by hand, and very few people make their own butter and cheese. Now the milk is sold by the dairy farmer from a bulk tank, a milk hauler comes around to get the milk in a tank truck and takes it to some milk plant where the milk is converted into the various dairy products.



Milk couldn't be bought in cartons in the old days.

IV

TRAVEL

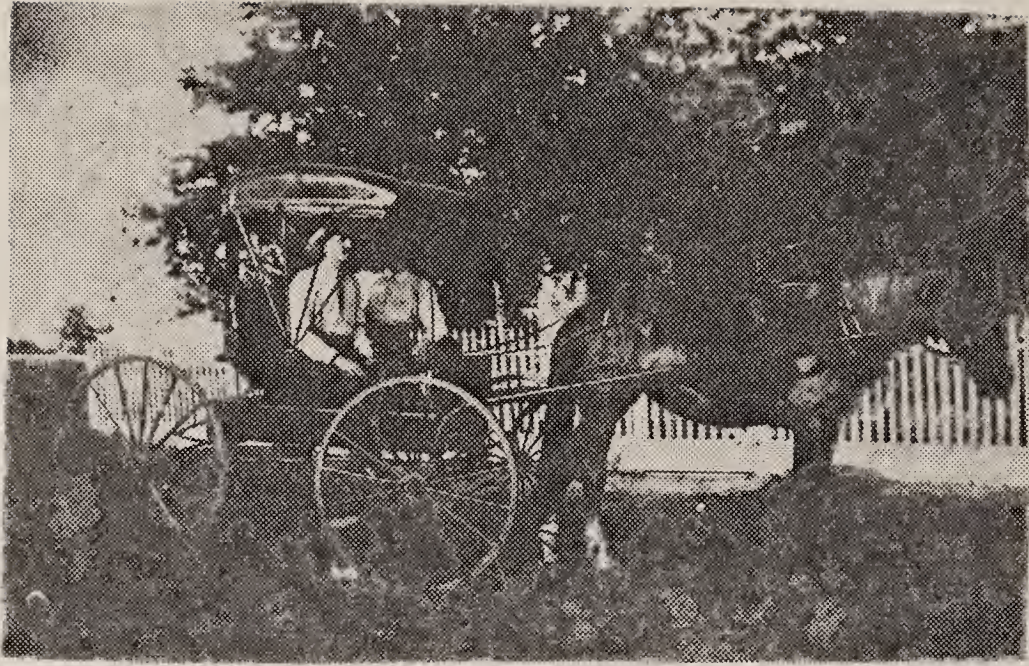
- a) Transportation
- b) Trains
- c) Automobile
- d) Road Maintenance
- e) Moving Days
- f) Mail Service

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation was by wagon, at first. Oxen hitched to the wagon was a very slow way to get places so people rather walked because that was faster, unless they had something to haul that was too heavy to carry.

Horses hitched to the wagon made better time when people were rich enough to own them.

At first there was only the heavy farm wagon. A seat with oval shaped springs would be set on the wagon for the papa and mama to sit on and the children had to sit on the floor of the wagon bed. Then came the spring wagon which was a lighter wagon and had two or three seats, according to the size of the family. It was called a spring wagon because it had oval shaped springs between the bed and axle cross bar which eased the bumps and jerks. After that came the buggy and the surrey: the buggy had one seat and usually only one horse hitched, the surrey had two seats and two horses hitched. The buggy had a leather top and extra side curtains which you could snap on in cold weather or rain. The same goes for the surrey except there were two styles in the surrey: one shaped like the buggy with a leather top, the other more fancy with an oblong straight flat roof with fringes all around. In cold weather quilts were used to cover the legs to keep warm and for protection. In the summer, lap robes were used. In the spring and summer more protection was needed because of unhoped-for accidents. The front seat was only about forty inches from the rear end of the horse. Especially in the spring for the year when the horses ate the young green grass, the reaction wasn't funny. When the horse lifted its tail and let loose the front seat riders often got a good sprinkling and were lucky if the lap robe caught it all. You can imagine the results when no lap robe was used.



Grandpa Alois Rainosek with his horse and buggy -- taken about 1918.



The buckboard--a modern way to go courting--taken about 1910.

There was also the buckboard, a four wheeled vehicle usually with a shaft for one horse. Some people had an extra tongue which could replace the shaft and two horses could be hitched. The buckboard had no kind of protection for sun or rain.

The gig was a two-wheeled cart with one seat, barely room for two persons. This was often used on very muddy roads. It was easier for the horse to pull, but the riders had to be careful because if there was an unexpected jerk the passengers would fall off backward.

Every vehicle was equipped with a buggy whip which was used to make the horses go faster. Also it had ropes to hitch the horses when you reached your destination. Every church, store or house had hitching posts.

This was not an accident-free era. If something scared the horses they shied and started running so that the driver could not hold them. The riders either fell or jumped off the wagon and often were hurt. The horses usually ran until they hit a tree or a fence, often breaking the wagon or buggy. It sometimes happened in the field by plowing that the horses ran away with the plow or cultivator into a fence getting cut badly. Horseback riders also had accidents as sometimes the horse started to pitch and threw the rider, often breaking his arm. The horse was a very faithful animal, still they **could** not always be trusted. Sometimes they would kick or even bite people, especially by feeding them or when being hitched.

What would an ox and a horse hitched to a wagon look like? Surely a funny sight, but it was done. One man had only one horse so he hitched an ox with the horse to the wagon when he went places.

TRAINS

Another means of transportation was the passenger train, every railroad had three or four passenger trains running daily. Usually in the summer there were excursion trains running on certain weekends to some city. Galveston was the most popular place. A round trip ticket from Weimar to Galvez sold as low as \$1.50 for a one day trip. Sometimes low rate tickets were sold to San Antonio, especially for Fiesta week in April.

The following are excerpts from the Houston Post in regards to RR service (dated November 8, 1970). "The Sunset Route between New Orleans and Los Angeles had its beginning in Houston back in 1851 when the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad started building at Harrisburg and headed west to Alleyton, eighty miles away. From this beginning the route gradually was enlarged under several names until January 12, 1883, when, under the Southern Pacific flag, the last spike in the Sunset route from New Orleans to the Pacific coast was driven at a point just west of the Pecos River in Texas.

"The first train to be named the Sunset Limited went into service in 1894 with a steam engine pulling four cars from New Orleans to the West Coast in 75 hours. But the heyday of the Sunset Limited came in 1950 when the first diesel-powered streamliner service was inaugurated.

"With much fanfare, five of the gleaming trains, costing \$15 million each went into service on the line and spanned the 2000 mile route in 42 hours. It was considered stylish to ride the Sunset Limited. Since that time however the private auto, busses, and speedy jet travel have taken their toll of railroad passengers.

"Before the bus and jet travel became so famous there were three passenger trains each way between New Orleans and the West Coast daily, often with a "Special" coming through.

Now there are only three runs a week and a spokesman says he is very pessimistic about the future of the Sunset Limited. Eventually it will be pulled off. Long distance passenger trains are not used today by businessmen in a hurry. People to whom time is important fly. Train passengers today are primarily vacationers, people with special affection for trains and older people who do not like to fly."

AUTOMOBILE

About the year 1910 when the first cars were bought, people and horses were afraid to meet them. For some time until the horses got used to cars, they were hard to hold down. Usually upon meeting a car, the people would all get out of the buggy, some would hold the horse by the bridle and others talk to it to keep it calm. Sometimes the people would tie the horse to a fence post and crawl through the fence to protect themselves. The roads were only one way and naturally the automobile had the right of way as they could not get out of the ruts.

When the first car arrived in La Grange it was the biggest attraction in the Mai Fest parade and it was displayed so the people could look at it.

When the owner of the car risked making a trip to Flatonina he would give advance notice in the local paper so no horse-drawn vehicles would be on the road that day. People would then keep looking to see the car as it went by.

The roads were very narrow and rough often filled with deep ruts and the car did a lot of spitting to make it. By 1912 fourteen more cars were in use. Gasoline was poured into the tank under the front seat with a sprinkling can. The passengers had to get out and the seat was removed to put gas in the tank. There were no buttons to push to put the light on. In case you didn't

make it home before dark, you had to carry carbide water and matches along, fill the lamps with the carbide and water and light it. The light was hardly as good as a flashlight. You could also expect at least one flat tire on a twenty-mile trip. Usually extra inner tubes and one or two extra tires were carried along. Then the motor would get hot and you had to stop by a farm house to get water for the radiator. There was no kind of starter. The cars had to be hand-cranked to start the motor and sometimes it would backfire and break the hand or arm of the crankerman. In cold weather they were especially hard to start or wouldn't start at all, so all you could do was stay at home.

The first cars made so much noise you could hear them coming before you could see them. Horses got shy and ran, cows stampeded in the pastures, dogs barked and people "watched the Ford go by".

Before the cars were used, salesmen would travel by train from town to town. Every town had a livery stable where the salesman would borrow or lease a horse and buggy to make his rounds, especially to other towns off the railroad. At night he would usually come back or sometimes he would spend the night in another town. When he was through making the rounds he would return the horse and board the train for his next stop. After the automobile became available, he used this to travel.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

In the early days there were no road graders, bulldozers, tractors, etc. to help build roads. Roads used to be very narrow, one track, and if it happened that two vehicles met, one had to try to get off the road to let the other pass. If the rain washed gullies in the road, a new road would be put in use beside the old one or the farmers had to repair the old one.

In later days every community had a farmer road boss. He had to see to it that the road was kept in a passable condition. Every farmer had to put in seven days roadwork per year with no pay. He also had to bring a team of horses or mules two and a half days a year to scrape dirt into washouts.

In later years the county worked the main roads. The county commissioner would bring the convicts out to work from the county jail. They had about a dozen pair of good mules and scrapers, which they used to scrape the dirt from the sides to build up a road. They had tents put up and spent the nights there chained to their cots. One of the convicts would do the cooking. The commissioner stayed with them. All the roads were dirt roads and in rainy weather often were impassable.

By the time more cars were in use, the roads were being improved, but it took a long time until they were wide enough for two cars to meet. Somewhere around 1920 the main roads were being graveled. The gravel was the size of baseballs and golf balls, still the people liked it because they did not get stuck. The gravel had to be spread with a shovel as there were no graders in those days. Compare this with all the good country roads and highways and all the modern road machinery of today.

MOVING DAYS

In the fall of the year there was a lot of moving done. Renters or sharecroppers would move from one place to another trying to improve by getting better land or housing. Moving days were scheduled either in November or December as soon as the crops were gathered and their next house was vacated. The neighbors were asked to help and usually there were from eight to fifteen wagon teams, each loaded to capacity with corn, hay, farm implements and household goods. It was a full day of work and if they moved fifteen

to twenty miles away they had to spend the night as the horses were tired from a day of hard work and needed to rest. An occasional drink of "schnapps" and something to eat was all that the movers expected. There was never any other pay. Sometimes it happened that people moved far away, say several hundred miles. In that case a train car was rented and horses, cows, feedstuff and all the household goods were loaded into the train car. One or two men had to ride the train car to keep watch on the animals. Trains were very slow as they had stops where they had to take water for their engines. When reaching their destination the car would be switched on a sidetrack for unloading.

Compare this with our modern day moving by truck or moving van. Train service has also improved from the old coal-burning locomotives to diesel engine.

MAIL SERVICE

Mail service was very poor, usually the post office was in a country store. People had to go ten to fifteen miles to get their mail. No one got much mail in those days. The people would pick up their mail only once or twice a month. In the first years of 1900 the first rural route carriers started to deliver mail. But many people did not trust them and rather walked to the post office for their mail.

The mail carriers had a rough time as there were no paved or graveled roads. When the weather was really bad, especially in the wintertime, they often had to travel horseback, sometimes taking two days to make their route. Creeks would get so high that they could not get across. Often you could see the mail carrier walking and leading his horse, probably he was tired of horseback riding and the horse was tired of walking through knee deep mud.

Now all the roads are improved, either hard-topped or graveled. The carrier can

make good time rain or shine, he travels in a car and usually is on time to the minute. There is also a big difference in the amount of mail then and now. Very few people did a lot of correspondence since they could not afford the two-cent stamp for a letter. Very few towns had newspapers and if they did have one weekly edition that was all. There are few farm people today who do not have rural mail service every day.

All the express, mail and freight went by train: mail on passenger trains, express and freight on freight trains. Now very little mail is handled on trains. It all goes by U.S. Mail trucks and larger portions of freight are hauled on trucks. It is a much faster and better service.

SOCIAL LIFE

- a) Church
- b) School Days
- c) Dates
- d) Weddings
- e) Funerals
- f) Field Work and Friendly
Neighbors
- g) Grumpy Neighbors
- h) Quilting Parties
- i) Quack Doctors
- j) Gypsies
- k) Christmas Season
- l) Amusements

CHURCH



First Hostyn Church

In the early days there would be church services only about once a month. Before there were churches built, Mass would be said in homes. By the turn of the century there were many churches built already, but with horse and buggy it was hard for the Pastor to keep up several parishes. So there was only one Mass said on a Sunday in a certain parish and the next Sunday in the other parish. Sometimes it was more than two weeks between services, especially in bad weather. Mass never started before ten o'clock and lasted until twelve noon. On special occasions till 12:30 or later.

Especially on days when the Bishop had confirmation, it was always 12:30 or 1:00 before we got to go home from church. Then the horses had to be unhitched and watered and fed. The family would eat their dinner about 2 p.m.



Third Hostyn Church built in 1910.

When the Bishop came from San Antonio by train to Schulenburg the day before confirmation, the parishioners would all go to church to meet him. They lined up about half a mile from the church and waited sometimes for hours in the hot sun. Some of the parishioners owned white horses, so it would be their honor and privilege to go meet the Bishop with four white horses hitched to a

canopy fringed surrey. When he arrived all the parishioners walked in procession headed by a brass band to the church. On the church steps a little girl gave a welcome address for the Bishop. Then all would go into the church where the Bishop would address the people and then follow with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



Confirmation picture of Annie Banse, left, and Louisa Behal, right—their sponsor Filomina Janda is in the center. Taken by C. Peterson Photograph Gallery, La Grange, Texas, about 1897.

People would sacrifice a lot in the early days, for example, on Corpus Christi day. The day before, certain parishioners would erect outside altars. In places they had readymade ones and they only had to assemble them. The altars were like small rooms with three walls and a roof. The front side was open, a table placed on the inside and fixed up like an altar with flowers. In Hostyn and other parishes they would build a frame of lathings and then cover the entire skeleton with fresh cedar. On Corpus Christi day a procession was held with the Blessed Sacrament and a band played church music and people sang. These altars were erected, one in each of the four corners of the church yard. Little girls would be flowergirls, dressed in white carrying small baskets with flower petals. As the procession proceeded they would drop flower petals in the path of the priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament. The procession would move from one altar to the other. When the round was made all the people would go back into church for the end of Benediction. The next day all the altars had to be torn down and removed.

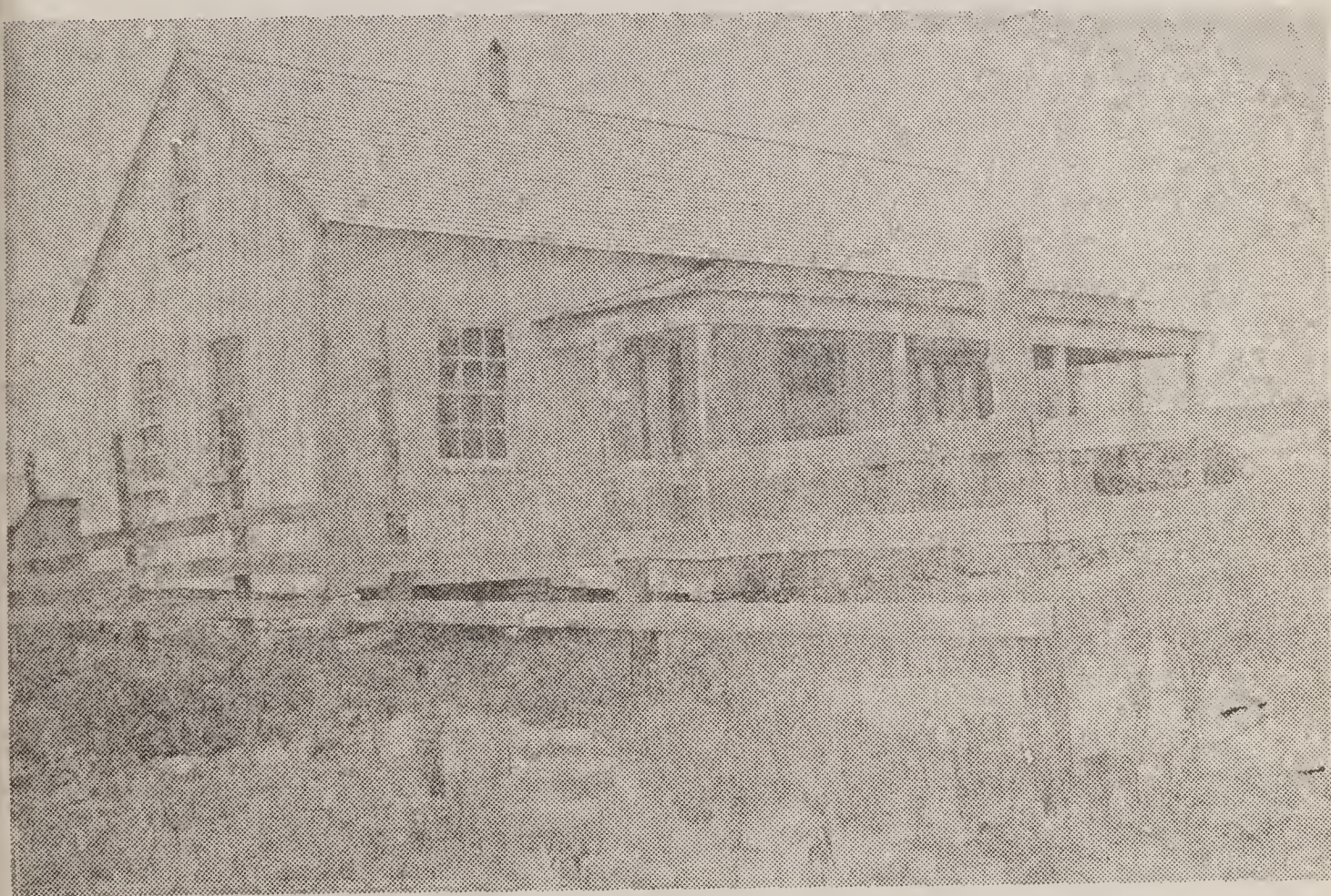
SCHOOL DAYS

School days then and now are as different as day and night. The country schools usually had one large room. If two teachers were needed, one would have class in the front part of the building, and the other in the back part. Although there were sixty to seventy children in the classroom, it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. A teacher had the authority to punish a child when the child misbehaved. The child got a good spanking or he had to stay in school during recess or dinner hour and study or write several hundred times "I shall not. . ."—whatever he was guilty of. Sometimes the child had to stay after school for half an hour or so to write. The parents did not go

argue with the teacher about it. If the child behaved and obeyed, the teacher would not punish him.

There were no school busses so children had to walk miles, some as far as seven miles, rain or shine, hot or cold. The schoolroom was heated with a big wood heater. The first children to arrive in the cold mornings built the fire in the heater. Every day after school about four children had to stay after school hours to sweep the school and clean up.

In 1899 when I started school in O'Quin there wasn't even an outdoor privy. The boys had the west side and the girls the east side of the wooded pasture next to the school and even had to crawl through a barbed wire fence to find the most convenient spot.



Schoolhouse in Bluff (Hostyn) where Mary Rainosek went to school--taken around 1910.

In 1901 Bluff, now Hostyn, became a parochial school and my sister and I were sent there. We had to walk through pastures for a short cut about two miles because around the public road it was about four miles. In good weather it wasn't bad, but in the rainy winter days the blackland mud got so deep that it often ran into our high top shoes and the broom weeds were as tall as we so when it was wet from dew we got wet to the skin. For about a mile there was only a cowtrail and a short stretch was a narrow road. When we got to school we had to stand by the stove to get our clothes dry and take our shoes off to warm our feet.

There were no hot lunches served so each child would carry a lunch bucket plus all the books. The lunch buckets had to be set neatly in a row on the floor. Sometimes ants would get into the lunch bucket and all over the food, so other children would share food with the unlucky one. The lunch usually consisted of bread and butter and maybe some jelly or a small jar of molasses to put on the bread. Some had cornbread and molasses or baked sweet potatoes and, after Christmas an apple. Once in a while a piece of cake or sausage was included in the winter.

We did not have grades. If the children knew one subject well they would get the next book. One could be advanced in mathematics and still be in the first reader. We had first, second, third and fourth readers, the came Texas History, etc. In the early days children used only slates for writing and working examples. A tablet was used for homework but we could not waste pages as we were allowed only two tablets during the school year.

School was not compulsory so children missed weeks of school and often went to school only three or four years. School was not considered a necessity, especially for the girls. If they could figure $2+2$ that was enough. What was required of a girl

was that she learned how to cook, keep house, sew and work in the field.

DATES



A modern way to go courting--on horseback--taken around 1910.

Dates did not drive up in a swanky sports car, honk honk, and drive off. Very often if it wasn't far, the boy would walk to go see his girl or he would go horseback. They stayed home, sat in the parlor and just talked or played some kind of game or looked at photographs and autograph albums. When mail order catalogs were first mailed out that was also something to look at. Sometimes a

boy would bring a dimes-worth of candy which was a treat. If he came in the afternoon the young folks sometimes would take a walk down the road.

About four o'clock lunch would be served—usually consisting of bread, butter, jelly and sometimes cake of some kind. If the boy stayed for a while into the night he would help with the chores. The girls were not excused from their chores, such as milking and feeding the cows, when they had company. The boys would go along and help.

WEDDINGS

Weddings usually were put on in a big way. There were no ice boxes to store food prepared in advance, so it was not easy as it is in these modern days. Noodles would be made a few weeks ahead of time for chicken noodle soup. A calf and hog would be butchered to make sausage and fryers killed for frying. All that had to be done the day before the wedding so it would not spoil—all this work called for a lot of help. Also kolaches, apple struddle and other food had to be prepared the day before.

No matter how big the wedding, it was always held at the home of the bride's parents, even the dance. Lumber would be borrowed from a lumber yard and a platform was built, with benches all around. The meals were usually served outside so the tables had to be built with benches and a skeleton for spreading tarpaulins to make shade over the tables. After the wedding all had to be torn down and the lumber hauled back to town.

There were no invitations sent out. Instead, the groomsmen did the inviting. Usually it was the first two groomsmen in the wedding party. They rode horseback from house to house, fired a pistol shot to announce their arrival. Then they were asked to come into the house. The first groomsmen made a speech inviting the family to the

wedding. They were usually treated to a drink of schnapps before going on their way again. Sometimes it took them several days to get around to all, especially if it was miles between homes.

The groomsmen also provided cigars and passed them around to the guests on the wedding day. There was always plenty beer on hand and it was up to the groomsmen to serve the guests with beer. Flies were also plentiful. When the food was on the table several people would have peach branches to chase the flies. Peach branches served the purpose best because of the long leaves.

Usually a man was hired to take care of the horses, unhitch them, then water and feed them. That was horse and buggy days. A band played from noon till sometimes 2 a.m. or as long as the people wanted to dance.

Country people did not go on honeymoons, that was unheard of. The day after the wedding, the young couple pitched in and helped clean up. And they lived happily thereafter (maybe), but divorces were almost unheard of.

Most all the weddings were in October or November, on a Monday or Tuesday or on a Wednesday if the other two days were taken.

In the early days the young people that were reared on a farm would also remain living on the farm. It was very seldom that a farmer's son would seek a job in town or city.

When a couple married they had to look around for a place that was for rent months before they got married. The boy usually got a pair of horses and a plow from home for his start. The girl got the most necessary furniture--a bed, dresser, wardrobe, six chairs, a kitchen table, a kitchen safe, and a cookstove. From then on they were on their own and bought additional necessary things as they could afford them. Usually the girl and sometimes the boy got a cow and a few hens. The girl tried to have a hope chest. If she could make some extra money in between field work at home, say by chop-

ping and picking cotton for others, she would save up her money to buy something for their future home, maybe a rocker, sewing machine, a trunk, etc. The boy usually had a trunk where he kept all his belongings clothes, etc. In those days the women worked as hard in the field as the men did, and helped with all the field work besides doing the housework. There were no bride showers and the wedding gifts were small.



Ferdinand and Aloisia Munster celebrating their golden wedding anniversary-- taken about 1932.

In 1881, a wedding party was all ready to go to church, a wagon with a pair of horses hitched to it was the conveyance. The wagon had two seats like benches across and some chairs to sit on. The groom sat on a chair in the rear of the wagon. They came to a steep hill, so when they reached the hill, up stretched the driver of the team. He

cracked his whip and the horses got frightened, took a quick jump, and started to run. The sudden jerk unbalanced the chairs and the groom fell backward off the wagon into a mud puddle. He was a very dignified man and had a fine, good-fitting suit, now all full of mud. There was a house on top of the hill so he headed for that to try to borrow a suit. The man was very willing to let the groom wear his suit, but the groom wore about a size 32 and the man about a size 44. But the wedding continued anyway, the groom in the oversized suit. The groom often recalled the incident and would say, "Why was I such a damn fool to sit on the last chair". However, that did not shorten their lives, they lived to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary and lived a few years longer.

FUNERALS

There were no hospitals in the country in the early days. Houston and San Antonio were the closest and people could not afford such a luxury besides the expense of train fare. People died at home in spite of the best care the family could give. The country doctor was called occasionally and gave his advice.

There were no professional grave diggers. When someone died several neighbors would volunteer to dig the grave for no pay. One of the family would go with a neighbor to get the coffin. There were no embalmers or funeral homes. Around 1900 there was a hearse available, but the charges were \$25.00 and only the rich could afford that. Usually a neighbor or friend was asked to haul the corpse (the coffin) to church or cemetery. My father was asked very often because he owned a spring wagon. That was easier riding than a farm wagon.

Everyone who possibly could attend the funeral did so and took some flowers, no matter what kind, just so they were flowers.

There were no florist arrangements. There were no funeral notices, instead, someone was asked to go let all the kinfolks know as well as neighbors and friends. It took a horseback rider sometimes all day to make the round. The family with the help of some neighbors or kinfolks would dress the deceased person and also place him in the coffin. The body was kept in the home until the day of the funeral. All the people came to the house and the funeral procession went from there to the church or cemetery. The Catholic people were taken to church and a Mass was offered before burial, mostly all the other religions went from the house to the cemetery. Often no preacher was available so a lay person, sometimes the president of a lodge, had the eulogy.

FIELD WORK AND FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

With a sparingly settled country, people loved one another. They would walk for miles to visit a neighbor. When they were seen walking toward your house they would be so welcomed that some of the family would go meet them. There was no such thing as knocking on doors. If you got to a house unnoticed you were supposed to call "hello" until someone heard you. The menfolks often gave a loud whistle instead. When a farmer got sick during field work season and could not work, the neighbors set a day and all got together and did the field work for the sick neighbor free of charge. If one family finished chopping cotton or corn, picking cotton or hauling corn before the neighbor got through, often they would go help the neighbor finish. In later years help was hired when needed. Pay for a day's work of chopping cotton from sunup to sundown was fifty cents per day, for picking cotton, thirty-five cents per hundred pounds. You had to walk to and from work, sometimes three to four miles and that meant getting up about four o'clock in the morning.

Usually meals would be served morning and afternoon: lunch in the field and dinner in the house. Water was taken to the field in tin buckets with lids and especially in the afternoon, by the time you got to drink, it was lukewarm as there was no ice water.

There were no fancy lunches served—bread and jelly, or for a big treat, muffins. One place I picked cotton the farmer's wife would bring molasses bread (bread with molasses on it) and fried bacon to the field for lunch. How good that tasted, and I was always looking forward to lunchtime.

GRUMPY NEIGHBORS

In the old days neighbors were good friends, visited and helped each other with whatever there was to be done. If one neighbor saw the other neighbor fix fence or cut wood, and he had time, he would go help him, just for company sake.

There was one family in our neighborhood who was very independent and never wanted help or helped anyone. Otherwise they were good, honest, hardworking, law-abiding citizens. They enjoyed visiting friends and eating a good lunch but hesitated to return an invitation. Lunch costed money which they liked too much. Once my sisters went to visit with them when they just returned home from church and did not have their lunch yet. When dinner was ready the son took my sisters out in the yard to look at their beautiful oleander. He then slipped away to go eat and let them stand outside.

QUILTING PARTIES

Usually after New Year's Day was quilting time. The quilt tops were pieced from scrap material before Christmas so they could be quilted when bad weather set in. The ladies from the neighborhood were asked to help and about eight or ten would come. About 3:30p.m.

there was a coffee break and a good lunch was always served. If there wasn't too much sewing to be done then a quilt could be finished in an afternoon. Otherwise, some would go back the following day to help finish it.

The ladies enjoyed it very much, especially when the weather was bad and they could not do much else. When one quilt was done often another one was put up and the group would come back. Next week another party would be held at a different place and so on until all the quilts were quilted.

Gin cotton was used and that often had to be corded before using. Now cotton batting is used.

QUACK DOCTORS

Around the year 1910 and up into the twenties there used to be free tent shows. Some quack doctor and his family or some friends who worked with him would pitch tent in small towns and put on a free show every night. Usually a clown had part in the show to amuse the audience.

Between acts the quack doctor would get his commercial in usually worded like this, "Step right up, folks and get your bottle of Dr. Quick's Golden Elixir and Tonic. It's good for everything that ails you and costs only one dollar a bottle. It cures rheumatism, headache, backache, and whatever you have." The old fakers sold Indian Herbs and the famous Elixir, which was no more than colored water with horrible tasting bitters. Now the medicine shows are gone, but you hear them on radio and television and read about them in newspapers and magazines.

GYPSIES

Once or twice every year a Gypsy band would travel through the country. They usually had one or two covered wagons with donkeys hitch-

ed to them. They would camp near a creek so they would have water for themselves and their donkeys. Usually there were a few grown persons and a lot of children. They had one or two pet monkeys and some kind of music box with a crank. When they cranked the music box, it would play a tune and the monkeys would dance. The Gypsies would take the monkeys and the music box and visit the closest houses. They asked for food in return for their performance. They spent several days in one place and then they moved on.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Christmas in the early days differed with the modern day customs. In those days children did not get toys the year round, so they anxiously awaited and counted the days till Christmas. Neither did the children get to see the decorated Christmas tree until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day morning. If they saw it on Christmas Eve, it was not before every member of the family was through with his chores, the supper dishes done, and everyone had taken a bath and had put on clean clothes. When the door was opened the children were almost speechless to see such a beautiful Christmas tree. It was decorated with candy, apples, oranges, garlands and other Christmas ornaments. Small candles were placed in candle holders with clips and fastened on the branches. The Christmas tree always had the most prominent place in the parlor and would be kept at least until January 6, the Feast of the Three Kings.

Before the gifts were handed out the whole family would join in singing a few Christmas songs. The girls usually got a doll and some other small toy and the boys probably a cap pistol or a jumping jack. They also received candy, nuts, apples and oranges.



A very beautiful and expensively decorated Christmas tree at the Anton F. Fojtik's home--taken about 1900.

One Christmas Eve a moving wagon, movers they were called, stopped at our house and asked permission to camp in our yard over night. They were a young couple with two small children moving cross country. We gave them permission to stay, watered and fed their horses, and gave the family food. We then asked them to join us at night for the Christmas party. The little girl was about two years old so she got the doll that

FAMILY HISTORY

Very often when a group of elderly people meet, their conversation leads back to the "good ol'days". Taking it all around, were those days really so good? Let us consider some of the facts. The majority of the older people are direct descendents from immigrants from a foreign country, the majority in this area coming from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Some families would take the daring step together while others would split up. In some instances the father would sail first or some of the children of the family would go with relatives to find their future happiness(?). The other part of the family usually followed later.

My father, Alois Rainosek, his parents, three brothers, and a sister immigrated to the United States from the vicinity of Prague, Czechoslovakia in the year of 1859. My father was nine years old at that time. Their voyage by steamboat and rough seas took nine weeks. They landed in Galveston and came by train to Columbus where they were met by some friends who immigrated before them.

They loaded their steamer trunks on the wagon. Then the family climbed on the wagon and the driver was ready to start the cross-country trip toward home. The wagons had oxen hitched to them, and the journey would go by a snail's pace covering only eight miles a day. Usually most of the passengers would walk to make the load easier for the oxen to draw. Oxen could not endure traveling long without resting and also needed water, so when crossing a creek or coming by a farmhouse where water was available, the oxen would be watered and allowed to rest. When oxen weren't given water in due time, they would have their tongues hanging out of their mouths and many times if they got tired, they would lie down and stay put till they felt like getting up again.

The Rainosek family settled on the Bluff (Hostyn) where they farmed for a living.



Herman Rainosek, Alois Rainosek, and John Rainosek (left to right)--taken in 1910.

In 1878 my grandmother, Julianna Munster, who was a widow, her daughter (my mother), Marie Munster and her son, Ferdinand Munster, packed their steamer trunks and sailed for the "land of promise". They left their homeland, Halbendorff, Oestereich (Austria) in the early fall of 1878 and their voyage took almost four weeks. They were met by my grandmother's sister and husband, the Ferdinand Beyers, who had immigrated two years earlier and lived in the Bluff (Hostyn) community. Schulenburg was fifteen to twenty miles from their place and going by ox-wagon took several days. They camped out over night. There was no regular steamer or train schedule and the arrival of the steamer often varied more than a week. Usually the people who met the immigrants had to camp until the expected people arrived.

My grandmother and family were welcomed into the Beyer's modest log house until they found employment. Ferdinand Munster was a

pretty lively at dances. There was always plenty of beer on tap at 5¢ per glass. When the beer started to work they often got into fist fights. There was no shooting, but sometimes a pocket knife was used to threaten an offender. On one occasion a man used his pipe as a weapon, hit another man on his cheek. The next day he had the shape of the pipe swollen up on his face. Often when they got real happy a group would get together and sing songs, curse and fuss. I am sure often they would not find the way home home if the horses didn't, but if you let a horse go it's own way, it will always take you home. The most popular dance music in those days were the waltzes, two steps, schottish, and square dances. Some names of the dances are Blue Danube Waltz, Redwing, Rainbow, Under the Shade of the Old Apple Tree, and Narricana. There were some very good polkas included on the list. At the end of the dance, Home Sweet Home would always be played.



Children enjoying watermelon feast.
The Helmcamp children—Edna, Robert,
and Herbert. with their baby-sitter
second from the right--taken in 1912.

For other amusements the youngsters would have play parties, usually outside in moonlight nights. The boys and girls from the neighborhood would gather and play games outside, like dropping the handkerchief, hide and seek, ring around the rosie, etc. When tired they would sit on cotton bales and sing songs and play a guitar.

For refreshments, they went to the well. drew up a bucket of fresh water and all drank from the same dipper. During watermelon season the group was treated to watermelons. Everybody enjoyed it and was happy.
Good Old Days.

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